

What A Difference 10 Years Makes!

The Clean Water Farms Project

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(Part 1 of a 2 part series)

You may not be able to see a difference in water quality monitoring data after 10 years, but there are far more producers who could answer simple water quality questions about their practices than ever before, and that's an important accomplishment for the Clean Water Farms Project.

What is the Clean Water Farms Project?

Picture a farm producing a viable income, a desired lifestyle *and* cleaner water for downstream uses. That's the goal of the Clean Water Farms Project. KDHE has partnered with the Kansas Rural Center for this project. Established in 1979, the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) has worked to strengthen independent family farms and rural communities. By promoting sustainable farming methods, KRC strives to help farmers and rural communities find information and develop ideas that will lead to an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable agriculture.

In 1995, KDHE partnered with the KRC and has built a relationship that has lasted for over 10 years. This includes using the cluster farm mentorship/networking process funded by the Kellogg Foundation. The initial project was developed using EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 funds to develop a project (Clean Water Farms Program-CWFP) that would educate farmers and landowners on water quality, nonpoint source pollution and measures to help assure protection and restoration of waters of the state.

The key to this project was to give financial incentive for applicants to demonstrate their innovative approaches to farming methods resulting in protecting or improving their local surface and or groundwater. There was also an attempt to validate the effectiveness of their practices by partnering with the Kansas Biological Survey. A monitoring scheme was set up to evaluate practices on locations volunteered by participants. As with many projects involving monitoring, over a short period of time, results were inconclusive. The landowners are certainly more knowledgeable then prior to their project endeavors.

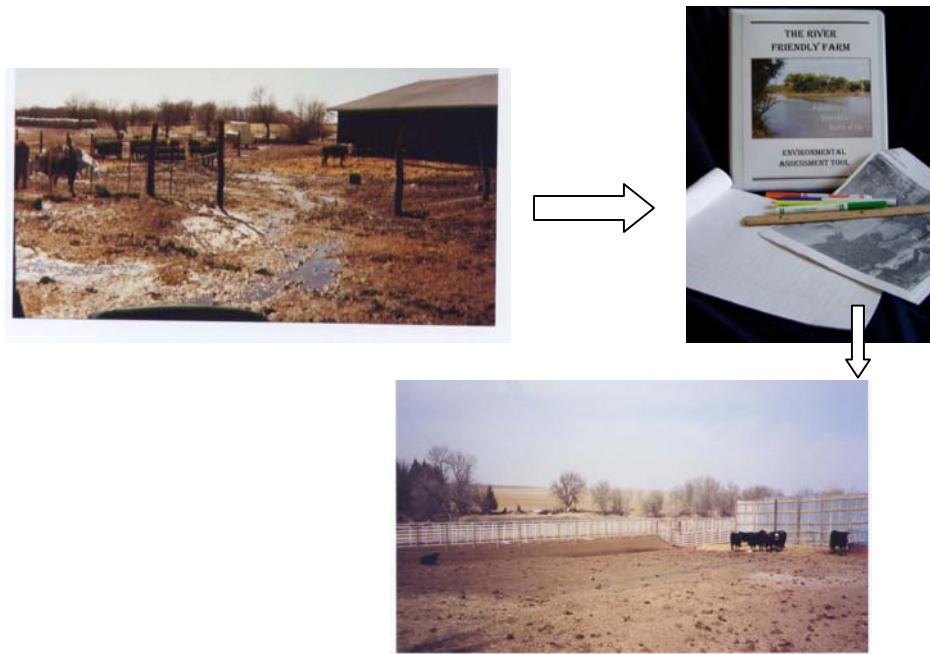
How much did the project cost?

Requirements for the KRC to receive the grant included a contribution of non-federal match equaling 50 percent of the total grant. This included volunteer, in-kind work, costs of activities consistent with the goals of the project (such as salaries, information and education materials etc), yet from another non-federal source and other non-federal cost share funds. The CWF applicant could receive up to \$5,000 and also had to contribute their share (as previously described).

Lessons Learned:

A key lesson learned early in the project was that producers must have a clear understanding of the problem or threat to water quality. In partnership with Kansas State University, the Kansas Rural Center developed the River Friendly Farm Plan—an

environmental assessment to help farmers evaluate their farms or ranches and develop a plan for addressing problems. By using this self-environmental assessment (River Friendly Farm Plan) priorities could be established. The farmer is eligible for a \$250 stipend upon completion of the assessment. CWFP then helped producers develop action plans, and offered funds on a competitive basis to eligible producers to implement some parts of the plan, as well as helped them to identify other financial resources.



EVENTS: 46 farm tours were held; 42 producer workshops and 95 presentations have attracted 1,400; 520; and 3,000 participants, respectively.

- PRODUCERS HELPED: 98 Demonstrations funded,
- COUNTIES: 34
- FEET OF STREAM BANK STABILIZED- 62,882
- ACRES OF CROPLAND CONVERTED TO GRASS- 879
- ACRES WITH A PLANNED GRAZING ROTATION - 1404
- ESTIMATED TOTAL LIVESTOCK (POLLUTION) CONTROLLED:
- 6,294 Head of Cattle, 4000 Head of Hogs; and 400 head of Sheep
- ALTERNATIVE TO STREAM/POND ACCESS WATERING SYSTEMS: 26
- ONSITE WASTEWATER SYSTEMS REPAIR: 4
- Hundreds of hours of media time (including radio programs, Web site and an episode on PBS series *Sunflower Journeys*) describing projects and how to get involved.
- 100 newsletter articles, news releases

Section 319 Financial Assistance: \$400,000

Producer Contributions: \$890,000

Project Management And Information And Education: \$2,451,994

Do you have a friend or relative that may benefit from this effort, visit the Kansas Rural Center Web site: <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/projects.html> to learn more

FUTURE PROJECT ENDEAVORS - LOOK FOR EXCITING CHANGES FOR THIS PROJECT IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

Photos and literal contribution provided by the Kansas Rural Center.